

After a Stormy Twilight

Oppenheim, James, 1882-1932

After a stormy twilight
I awoke this morning, as if sleep had healed and renewed me,
And put me forth as a fresh blossom among the May blossoms,
Clear as the clear blue sky, and clean and strong as the radiance of the sun. . .

It seems to me now as if I understand what was tangled and penetrate what was thick. . .
O never must I forget that there is no joy in a man who does not accept with love and his whole
body the living world,
For the great acceptor is the great transcender:
Out of the circle of his instincts he has broken as if a lake became a river. . .
Now he flows forth into the sea of the world,
With strong deep tide and waves whipped of the sun
Seeking the salt.

I was a whirlpool sucking myself in and under
As a child, afraid, wanting the measureless approbation of the herd,
Crowd-comfort for my loneliness, to say "Yea, yea" to the public that I might go safe,
But saying "Yea, yea" because of the colossal appetite for power,
My little person gnawing at bones of fame, yelping for meat of dominion. . .
Truly Self and the Crowd used me as a slave and a serf.

But now I see that I must turn from will-to-power
And seek will-to-inner-power,
Deal with my own body and my desires until I walk freely. . .
And now I see that I must turn from will-to-submission to the herd
And become a free acceptor of life,
Who gives himself or withholds himself as it seems best. . .

When, O Democracy,
Thou walkest in thy youth on the seashores of the oceans of the world,
And art the beaming countenance of Man,
When, O Future-God. thou art a body of joy, clear-eyed, and musical of lips,
Truly thy children shall seek no mastery over one another,
But each shall turn his creative hands upon himself,
And in self-surpassing cease being tyrant over another,
And in freedom cease being slave of another:
A race of volunteers seeking each to present the gift of a great Self unto the world.

Far off, thou shinest!
Far--and the years divide this morning and thee!
Through what harsh straits of discipline and blood-spilling we must travel unto thee,

Through what mean tyrannies and slaveries,
Through what anguish and confusion,
The guns today thunder deep meanings and their fires flash glimpses. . .

I cannot wait for thee . . .
I begin now to seek thy essential strength,
I give myself over to the World and to men and women,
I battle with myself.

I accept the terrible road and the inglorious path of dark anguish that leads up to thy terrain of
laughter.